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Espionage Under a Cloud

Everyone knows that espionage plays an important role in every government. In fact, survival may depend upon it. Yet it carries risk and suspicion in the very governments which must maintain it.

Not only the American public but world capitals were shaken over the shooting down of the U-2 plane over Russia just at the time when President Dwight Eisenhower was scheduled for a summit conference with Soviet leaders.

France is now troubled by a scandal involving its secret service which threatens French relations with Morocco. The French secret service appears to be involved in the kidnapping and probable murder of Mehdi Ben Barka, a Moroccan opposition leader.

Many Americans have long been uneasy about activities of the Central Intelligence Agency. Uneasiness reached a peak during the administration of the late John F. Kennedy when it was felt the CIA was meddling in the political affairs of South Vietnam. It has also been under suspicion in Latin America.

Of necessity, the CIA operates in secrecy and even Congress does not know the size of its budget, how it is spent or much about its operations.

Sen. Eugene J. McCarthy, D-Minn., wants to know what effect the operations of the CIA has on foreign policy. He has called for an investigation and says that unless the Senate Foreign Relations Committee undertakes such a study on its own, he will seek a showdown in the committee on a formal resolution proposing an inquiry.

The American public would like some assurance that the CIA is not being used as a political wing of any administration to further foreign policy. There are however, dangers in a congressional investigation, and there are no assurances that it would be effective. So many of the congressional probes have blown up a storm but brought no reforms.

It is good that there is congressional concern. That concern in itself should have a restraining effect. What Americans want from espionage is protection, not international intrigue.